

The Annual Census of Giant Pacific octopuses in Puget Sound

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Keywords: octopuses, octopus survey, Puget Sound, Seattle Aquarium

I am frequently asked how many octopuses there are in Puget Sound and how the population is doing. To establish a baseline, six years ago I organized a diver survey of the giant Pacific octopus (*Enteroctopus dofleini*) in Puget Sound. This has become an annual event of the Aquarium's Octopus Week held in the middle of February. All divers are asked to report any octopus sightings then to the Aquarium. The information requested was the location of the dive site, where the octopus was in relation to shore landmarks, the depth of their den, the time of day, a description of the den, and an estimate of the octopus's size, including some feature of the octopus, such as width of largest sucker seen. On average, 162 divers per year have reported 72 octopuses over the three day weekend in Puget Sound. Most were reported in the Admiralty Inlet, Hood Canal, and Tacoma Narrows areas but this may be because they are popular dive areas. With the divers' help, I will continue to organize and conduct the annual Puget Sound Octopus Census. The results are encouraging for the stability and health of the octopus population and I thank those who helped.